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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

UNDINE

A DREAM PLAY
IN THREE ACTS

By W. L. COURTNEY

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
MDCCCCII

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Do you remember, love, when once I dreamed,
In a rose sunset by a rosy sea,
While o'er our heads the changing colours gleamed,—
Of all that human life, well-lived, might be?

You laughed. I think I hear your laughter rend
The sweet illusion of a future age:
It was not thus, you said, that "that great end,"
Which we all strive for, "dawns on history's page"!

No, "life is earnest, life is real," you
Had proved it so by many a dreary act;
And dreams were valueless, and only true
"Dry, hard, experimental, actual fact."

Dear, fond, prosaic babbler! Yet you knew
The thousand unrehearsed effects of morn,
In twilight grey the inimitable hue,
In midnight black the mystery forlorn.

You saw the golden glory of the flower,
You saw the pageantry of heath and tree;
What are they? Visions of a dreaming hour,
Brain-pictures, deftly wrought by you and me.

Who paints the rosy tints of sky and sea?
Whose is the rapture that the poet dreams?
What is the true save what we think to be?
What is the real other than what seems?

W. L. C.

October 1902.

CHARACTERS

UNDINE.
COUNT HULDBRAND OF RINGSTETTEN.
BERTALDA.
FATHER HEILMANN.
FISHERMAN.
FISHERMAN'S WIFE.
BERTALDA'S FOSTER-PARENTS.
SHEPHERD.
THREE BEGGARS.
A BLIND MAN.

COURTIERS, ATTENDANTS, CROWD, ETC.

ACT I. *Interior of Fisherman's Cottage.*
ACT II. *Hall of Castle of Ringstetten.*
ACT III. *A Mountain Gorge near Ringstetten.*

ACT I

Scene I

Interior of Fisherman's *cottage. It is evening. A staircase comes down from the upper part of the cottage at one corner: there is a fireplace in the centre with an ingle-nook, and a spinning-wheel stands at one side of it, where the* Fisherman's Wife *is spinning. The* Fisherman *enters by the door leading outside, and, as he enters, a gust of wind shows that outside a storm of rain and wind is raging, the windows are rattling with the tempest, and the sound of a lashing rainstorm is heard on the roof, while the wind howls round the eaves. While the* Fisherman's Wife *is seated very quietly and placidly, the* Fisherman, *after shutting the door, is restless and disturbed. He comes to the fireplace, warms himself for a moment, then goes to the window, and returns once more to the fireplace. He glances at his wife, as though irritated by her stillness.*

Fisherman. It is many years since we had such a storm—not since Undine came to us. And the water is rising all round, and cutting us off from the mainland. It makes one uneasy and restless. Where is

Act I. Sc. 1.

Undine? How can you sit there, wife, hour after hour, as though nothing was happening—as though nothing was going to happen?

Wife. No one can alter fate. [*She goes on spinning.*]

Fish. Oh, I have not your patience. You sit there, just as you have sat for years—spinning, spinning, spinning. And the world is altering all the time. So many mornings and evenings come and pass away; and the sun rises and sets, and the stars come out: and each day something is happening which may change all our lives. I am very uneasy and restless to-night. I feel that some change is coming. I feel it in my bones.

Wife. Well, husband, if it has to come, it will come. You can do nothing but wait and receive at Fate's hands whatever Fate has to give you.

Undine [*coming downstairs, gaily singing*].

> Where is the Sea-King's home?
> There where the great fish roam,
> In the heart of the deep sea's foam,
> There is the Sea-King's home. . . .

Arkël, Sibol, Harald, Kühleborn! I hear you! I hear you! [*Dances round* FISHERMAN'S WIFE *and kisses her.*] I am coming, I am coming! [*Goes to window.*]

Fish. Where are you going, Undine? It is not a night for you to leave the house.

Undine [*laughs*]. Why not? It is a night when all my kinsmen are abroad! Arkël, Sibol . . . [*She opens the window.*]

Fish. Hark, how the winds are howling and the rain . . . the rain!

Undine. Yes [*shutting window*], they are riding the wings of the rain! and I hear them calling for me . . . their voices are tossed along the paths of the storm! I am coming! I am coming! [*She goes to door.*]

Fish. [*coming up to her*]. Undine, do not leave us!

Undine [*blowing a kiss to him*]. Only for a little while! I am the child of the storm! [*Sings a few notes and then goes out laughing.*]

[FISHERMAN *goes to door—looks after her—then shuts the door with a sigh and comes to fireplace.*

Fish. All the spirits of evil are in the air. I can hear them muttering their spells. They whisper and whisper, and then they do the mischief which God allows. Hark, what was that? [*He crosses himself devoutly.*] I thought I heard a cry. Undine! [*there comes a splash of water against the window panes, followed by a wild laugh*] Undine! Come back! Come home!

Wife. She will not come. She loves the storm. She is the daughter of the winds and waves.

Fish. No, no, she is our daughter—yours and mine, wife. It is time she gave up her impish tricks. She is no longer so young as when we found her. She is no more a child. [*He goes to the door and calls.*] Undine! Come home!

Voice in Distance. No—no—I am happy here! [*Laughter.*] [FISHERMAN *shuts door.*

Act I. Sc. 1.

Wife. She will never be our daughter, husband. She is not of our kith and kin. Is it red blood that flows in her veins? I do not know, nor do you. What is it that is wanting in her face? Something which others have, men and women like ourselves, but she has it not. She has strange, uncanny ways. Can she be warm and loving and kind? Can she love? I do not know, nor do you.

Fish. She will be our daughter, I tell you, if you only give her time. She will forget all her wild kindred and no longer be the sister of winds and waves. And when she loves a man, as woman loves, then the something you speak of will come into her face, and we shall be proud of her, and have little grandchildren at our knees . . .

Wife. I think not, I think not. She does not come to you when you call. Call her, she will not obey!

Fish. Hark, what was that? I thought I heard a cry. It is the second time I have heard a cry. [*He goes to the window: there is a knock at the door.*]

The Voice Outside. Let me in, let me in, for the love of God!

Fish. Shall I open, shall I open the door, good wife?

Wife. Better not. It is Kühleborn, it may be, Kühleborn, spirit of evil, disguised in some mad shape, come to mock at us.

Fish. But it may be some Christian soul. Yet who can be abroad on so wild a night?

[*The knocking is repeated, and the same voice.*

Wife. It may be Fate, good husband, knocking at our doors. One must open the door when Fate knocks.

Fish. [*going to door*]. Come in, come in. I pray God all may be well.

Enter KNIGHT HULDBRAND, *wet from the storm.*

Huld. I thank you, good friends. Peace be with you. I am worn and wasted with travel and I would fain rest awhile, if I may. Good Lord, how the wind blows to-night! [*He shivers.*]

Wife. Come to the fire, and welcome, sir. It is ill to be abroad in storms like these.

[HULDBRAND *throws off cloak, and comes towards fire.*

Fish. We ask no questions, sir. We give all we can, warmth and shelter.

Wife. Nay, but we can give some poor morsel to eat, if the knight be hungry.

Huld. I am hungry, good mother—and cold and wet. [*Sits down.*]

[*The* FISHERMAN *bestirs himself to put bread and cheese and beer from a cupboard on the table, the* KNIGHT *watching him awhile, and then gazing into the fire abstractedly.*

Huld. [*after a moment's pause*]. You have not asked my name, good friends, but I owe it to you and to your hospitality to tell you. I am Count Huldbrand of Ringstetten—perchance you know the castle?

Act I. Sc. 1.

Fish. Ay, ay. I have heard of it.

Huld. But what a forest! What a forest! [*Looks into the fire gloomily.*]

Fish. You lost your way in our forest, sir?

Huld. Yes . . . All the devils of the air are abroad to-night!

Wife. Ay, ay. They ride the horses of the wind, and the spirits of the forest come to meet them. Trouble and woe, trouble and woe for those who have to pass them, when they are at play!

Huld. [*shudders*]. And the voices, and the whisperings, and the thunder of their laughter! I was mad to try the journey.

Fish. You were put to some proof, sir?

Huld. No—well, in one fashion, yes. I was bidden by the lady, Bertalda, the queen of the tourney, to pass through the forest. I could not be her liege-knight if I did not accept her challenge. But it was a fool's errand I was sent upon. I lost my horse, for he was frightened and threw me, and galloped into the night. And I was forced to make my way as best I could on foot. It was a fool's errand—just to win a lady's smile. May I eat, good mother?

Fish. Ay, sir, eat and drink. It is humble fare, but you are welcome.

[*The* KNIGHT *eats silently and there is silence. Suddenly there is a splash of water on the window panes and a peal of laughter. The* KNIGHT *starts.*

Huld. What was that?

Fish. Nay, sir, do not start. It is only my wild madcap of a daughter, playing us one of her tricks.

Huld. Your daughter? And abroad such a night as this?

Fish. Yes, our daughter, Undine. She has ever been fond of some roguery. But I would that she would come back home.

Wife. She is not of our kith and kin, Sir Knight. We lost our own bairn, and heavy was our sorrow. Then was this child, Undine, found asleep on the edge of the lake. And we took her, and have brought her up as our own. But in nature she belongs not to us but to the waters whence she came. Undine, the child of the wave.

Fish. Come, come, good wife. She will grow to be our very own in time. She is but seventeen as yet. And dearer to us every year that passes. [*Goes to the window, opens it and listens.*] But I would fain see her face and know that she is safe. Undine! Undine!

Huld. It cannot be well that she should be out and abroad to-night.

Fish. I am going out to find her, good wife. I cannot sleep in peace, if she be not returned.

Huld. And I will go with you and help you.

Fish. Nay, sir, I would not trouble you. You have had walking enough to-night.

Huld. I am stronger now. Come, Fisherman, we will find her. [*Puts on cloak and hat and they go out together.*]

Act I. Sc. 1.

Wife [*left alone puts away the eatables in the cupboard and then goes on spinning*]. We do not know when Fate comes to our doors, for she comes in many guises. But she must always come in . . . there are no bolts and bars that will keep her out. As I sit here and spin I think of many things, and sometimes I know when Fate's moment has arrived. Dark and strange is the forest, and dark and strange the figure which moves through it . . . moving, moving to our doors. What will the morrow bring? That which is born of to-day. It is fated, it cannot be altered.

[*A chorus outside sings softly.*

High in the spaces of sky
  Reigns inaccessible Fate:
Yields she to prayer or to cry?
  Answers she early or late?

Change and re-birth and decay,
  Dawning and darkness and light—
Creatures they are of a day,
  Lost in a pitiless night.

Men are like children who play
  Unknown by an unknown sea:
Centuries vanish away—
  She waits—the eternal She.

Nay, but the Gods are afraid
  Of the hoary Mother's nod;
They are of things that are made,
  She the original God.

They have seen dynasties fall
In ruin of what has been:
Her no upheavals appal—
Silent, unmoved, and serene.

Silent, unmoved, and serene,
Reigns in a world uncreate,
Eldest of Gods and their Queen,
Featureless, passionless Fate.

[*The* FISHERMAN'S WIFE *puts away spinning-wheel and exit to her room.*

SCENE II.

Enter KNIGHT HULDBRAND *with* UNDINE. *Both are wet with the rain, and* UNDINE'S *hair is blown about her face.* UNDINE *is very quiet, with large wistful eyes.*

Huld. I have found you, Undine. . . . I have found you at last.

Undine. Yes, you have found me. You were always sure to find me, for I have known you a long time past!

Huld. But how can that be, Undine? I knew your name, for your foster-father has told me, and your strange, wild history. But how do you know me? I have never seen you before, nor have you seen me.

Undine. I do not know your name—but that does not matter. What is your name?

Huld. Huldbrand—the Count Huldbrand, who lives in the castle of Ringstetten.

Act I. Sc. 2.

Undine. Huldbrand, Huldbrand. I will try to remember your name. But your name does not matter. I have known you a long time.

Huld. No, no, Undine . . . that is impossible.

Undine. Does it seem to you so strange? But I have dreamt of you, and dreams tell the truth.

Huld. When have you dreamt of me, Undine?

Undine. Oh, deep down in the blue waters, where all my childhood was spent. There were miles and miles of blue sea above me, and all my fathers and brothers and kinsmen were round me, and Kühleborn used to watch me with his big eyes.

Huld. Who is Kühleborn?

Undine. Hush! . . . you must not speak his name. He is my uncle, and he never liked me to dream, because he knew that in dreams I ceased to belong to the sea. Dreams always take one into another world and then one gets restless. All love of change is born of dreams. And if one desires change, then the old world slips away and the new thing happens to one—the strange new thing which is to give one a soul . . .

Huld. What do you mean, Undine?

Undine. They told me I had no soul, it was Kühleborn who told me. "You have no soul, Undine," he said; "what is the good of dreaming?" And I said, "But it is a soul I want; why should I not dream?" And he used to shake his head and turn away. But for me the passion grew stronger and stronger, the passion for the new thing, the

passion for a soul. And it was you whom I saw, you who were to give me a soul. That is why I have come up out of the deep waters to find you. . . . Long time have I known you, Huldbrand—— Act I Sc. 2

Huld. You are very beautiful, Undine.

Undine. Can one be beautiful if one has no soul? I do not think so. The soul must look out of the eyes. In the deep world below the waters there are many shapes and bodies and limbs which are beautiful, but no beautiful faces, no beautiful eyes . . . they are all soulless . . .

Huld. You are more beautiful than the women of my world, Undine.

Undine. The women of your world, Huldbrand? Are they beautiful? Tell me of them . . . I have only seen my foster-mother [*laughs*]. Have you seen many fair women, Huldbrand?

Huld. Yes, Undine.

Undine. Fairer than I am?

Huld. Yes. . . . I do not know . . .

Undine. Beautiful women? Have you seen one most beautiful woman? For to all of us there must be one most beautiful thing—that for which the body is athirst and the heart craves. I saw that in my dream—a face and a shape like yours, Huldbrand. And that is why I knew you when you came. But you—have you seen the one most beautiful woman?

Huld. I do not know, Undine—perhaps—I thought so—once.

Act I. Sc. 2.

Undine. You thought so once? When did you think so? Tell me about her. What was her name?

Huld. Never mind about her? Let us speak about you.

Undine. No, no, I want to know her name. Should I like her?

Huld. Her name was Bertalda.

Undine. Bertalda—it is a beautiful name. But I do not like her. Why do I not like her? Was she good to you? Do you love her?

Huld. I do not know—perhaps.

Undine. Whose are those colours you are wearing? Are they Bertalda's?

Huld. [*smiling*]. Yes. . . . But . . .

Undine [*takes his hand and puts her teeth to it*]. I hate her . . . I hate Bertalda! [*Her manner gets wilder.*]

Huld. Oh, little cat! Why did you bite me?

Undine [*gets up and goes away from him*]. What did Bertalda make you do? For all women make men do something.

Huld. You hurt me, Undine. Why did you bite me?

Undine. Because I hate Bertalda. What did she make you do?

Huld. She made me come through the forest. She was the queen of the tourney, and I wore her colours and had to do what she ordained. And she challenged me to go alone through the enchanted forest. But the forest brought me to you, Undine.

Undine. Ah, yes, the forest! I knew what must

have happened to you there. You had a strange time in the forest! [*Waltzing with slow steps.*] Many of my kinsmen were round you, Arkël and Sibol and Harald, and—Kühleborn! They were round you all the time, and they—teased you! [*Laughs.*] Act I Sc. 2

Huld. Yes—yes . . . but it is over now.

Undine [*still moving in slow dancing steps*]. I heard them calling, calling all night. The spirit of the storm, and the spirit of the trees, and the spirit of the waters. I knew that they were holding high revels. And once the voices were so loud that I went out, but they would not listen to me. And again, a little later, I heard them crying—"He is coming! He is coming! But Undine must not know! Stop him! Stop him! Bind him with your chains! Let him never get out of the forest, lest Undine should see him and love him!" I heard them plainly enough. [*Stops dancing.*] But it was fated that you should come here, and that I should see you, and that I should love you. [*Sings.*]

There was a kingdom fair to see,
  But pale, so pale, with never a rose:
The cold wind blows across the lea,
  Westward the pale sun goes.

There was a maiden, soft and dear,
  But pale, so pale, with never a rose:
Each quivering eyelid holds a tear,
  Sea-ward her sad heart goes . . .

[*Ends with almost a sob.*

Act I. Sc. 2.

You will not go away again, Huldbrand? [*Comes and sits down again.*]

Huld. No—I shall not go away again.

Undine. You will not leave me?

Huld. No—I shall not leave you.

Undine. Am I beautiful, am I beautiful, Huldbrand?

Huld. Yes, yes.

Undine. More beautiful than all? More beautiful than—Bertalda? [*Comes over to him and puts her hand on his shoulder.*]

Huld. Yes. Put your face near mine. Ah, you are beautiful, Undine! You are like the spring coming over the fields. You are the dawn coming over the waters. You are the first star that shines when the sun has gone down and the twilight creeps over the land. You are the flower of the earth, the fine-spun foam of the sea! You are beautiful—beautiful!

Undine. Do you love me—do you love me, Huldbrand?

Huld. Yes, I love you, Undine. Put your face close to me—close. Your mouth—give me your mouth. Your sweet, full lips. Ah! [*He kisses her.*] Why do you tremble, dear?

Undine. I love you, Huldbrand—I shall always love you. [*She kisses him.*]

Scene III

Enter Fisherman *with a priest*, Priest Heilmann, *both very wet.* Undine *goes forward to greet the* Fisherman. A& I. Sc. 3.

Fish. Undine [*embraces her*], you have come back, thank the good Lord for His mercies. I knew you would come back. [*Turning to* Knight.] You found her, Sir Knight? Nay, you might have let me know. I searched long and far, and all in vain!

Huld. And I only went down to the little river, and there on the opposite bank was Undine. I crossed the river—though she waved me back, for she knew the current to be strong—and the waves tore and tugged at me as I waded across. But I would not have Undine touch the water again.

Fish. You carried her over the water? [*The* Knight *assents.*] And you, Undine . . . are you glad to be home? You have made me very anxious to-night.

Undine. Yes, I am glad to be home. [*She is very quiet throughout this scene. She sits in a corner of the room, watching every one with big thoughtful eyes.*]

Huld. But you, too, have found some one? [*Indicating the* Priest.]

Fish. Yes. Come forward to the fire, Priest Heilmann. Your dress is dripping with to-night's storm.

Priest. It is a good deed you have done in that you

Act I. Sc. 3.

saved me to-night. I thought to die in the forest. But God was good to me. Perchance He hath still some work for His servant to do. [*Looks at* KNIGHT *and* UNDINE.]

Fish. Come, let us draw close to the fire, all of us. My old wife, I take it, has gone to bed. But we can talk awhile. Take some food and drink. [*The* PRIEST *shakes his head.*] The storm is dying down, I think.

Priest. Nay, still the clouds press low upon the earth, and the wind is still moaning round the eaves of the cottage, and the waters are running in mad course—the waters which divide us from the mainland, and bring us nearer this strange lake. The lake, too, is full of voices. What do they say to you, Fisherman? What do they say to you, Sir Knight?

Fish. To me they say that Undine is returned.

Huld. And to me that Undine is won.

Priest. And to me that God hath still some work for His servant to do. Nay, what was that?

[*There is a burst of rain upon the window, which forces it open. All of them sit still and look fearfully out into the darkness.* UNDINE *slowly rises, and remains standing, spellbound. The voice of* KÜHLEBORN *is heard singing.*

[KÜHLEBORN *sings.*]

A night of storm
And a night of woe!
And the sailors bold
And the ships of old

Are hidden and buried for aye
In the deep sea's mystery—
Long, long ago!

The ships are torn
And the men are dead:
And their names are lost
And their bones are tost
Hither and thither, to and fro,
Where no man may see and no man know—
I' the deep sea's bed!

Huld. Whose voice was that?

Undine. It was Kühleborn's. [*She goes over to the window, muttering some words, and moving her arms. The window closes again. The* PRIEST *holds up the cross hanging on his girdle.*]

Priest. There is witchery here. Devil or angel, man or fiend, I bid thee leave us. . . . I ban thee from our sight . . .

Fish. Nay, Father, we hear many such sounds, night and day. I pray you, be not concerned. For Undine knows how to govern these spirits. She talks to them in their own tongue, and they obey. Draw nearer the fire. The whole night has been alive with voices.

Huld. Ay, that is true. [*He shudders.*]

Priest. And for me it hath been a night of peril and of trial. The devil in many shapes hath been at my side: and strange, muttering shapes of temptation and sin have plucked at my girdle. . . . Not only

Act I. Sc. 3.

storm and wind and rain have buffeted me. These I could bear. But hell hath been let loose and all Satan's messengers have been abroad. Fiends have sate upon the back of winds, and the thunder hath echoed words of fearful blasphemy. . . . Is my penance complete, O God, is my penance complete?

[UNDINE *looks at him with wonder.*

Undine. What is your penance, good Father?

Huld. Is there some sin for which you have had to atone? Tell us, if your lips be not sealed.

[UNDINE *comes forward with her eyes fixed on the* PRIEST, *and sits by the side of the* KNIGHT *on the ground, with her head resting against his knee.*

Priest. Ay, I will tell you. For it is ill to bear a burden alone. Seven days ago I set out from a convent, because for me there was no longer a life within its holy walls. Only by suffering could I redeem what I had done. I had failed to save a soul.

Undine. Failed to save a human soul? [*She watches him intently.*]

Priest. An old man was dying, and to me it had been ordered to take to him the holy elements ere he died. I was to be with him at eleven—no later, for he was sinking fast, and I had some journey to travel ere I could reach him. But at ten deep sleep overcame me, I know not from what cause. And when I awoke at last and hurried to his side, it was too late. He was dead. His soul had gone unshriven to the other world, and the fault was mine, the fault was

mine! Eternally mine! [*He covers his face with his hands.*]

Huld. Nay, but we cannot help the tyranny of sleep.

Priest. Sir Knight, can a man win the whole world if the cost be the loss of a soul? The fault was mine, the sin was grievous. There could be no excuse or pardon for a sin like this. Many waters will not wash away the deep stain of wilful transgression.

Huld. And the penance, Father?

Priest. The abbot bade me wander forth on a hopeless quest. I was to seek through all the land, nor ever rest by day or night in the shelter of a home, until I had given a soul—given a soul in compensation for the soul I had lost. Is this not a hopeless task? For where and how can I give that with which all human beings are born—God's gracious gift of a soul, which lifts us from the brute? Nay, even now I am wrong to linger here. I may not take shelter in a home, till my task be done. And that, alas, it can never be! Woe is me, for I am undone, for ever and ever! God's penance is harder than I can bear!

[*He rises slowly from his seat with a deep sigh.* UNDINE *goes over to him and lays her hand on his arm.*

Undine. Holy Father, what is a soul?

Fish. Hear the child! What is a soul? Why, we all know that! Nay, mind her not, Father.

Huld. But let the child speak, and let the Father answer. What is a soul?

Act I. Sc. 3.

Priest. Ah, my child, I can only tell in part. It is that by which we live in this world and that by which we hope to live in the world to come. God gives it to us that we may be removed from the beasts that perish, and that we may know Him . . .

Undine. Does it hurt, the soul?

Fish. Why, what means this strange question? How can the soul hurt? Hush, hush, Undine . . .

Huld. I think I know what Undine means. . . . Is it true that things have more power to hurt us because we have a soul?

Priest. Ay, ay. Evil can hurt us, because we have a soul. Passion and sin can stain our lives, remorse can sting our conscience, because we have a soul. But . . .

Undine. Is it good to be hurt, to be stained, to be stung . . .?

Priest. My child, it hath been so ordained, that by suffering men should become good.

Undine. Can one love without a soul? [*Looking away from* PRIEST *and nestling against* HULDBRAND.] You can tell me, Huldbrand, for the Father knows little, may be, about love.

Huld. Tell me yourself, Undine, for indeed I cannot say——

Undine. I think one may love without a soul . . . as the birds and the beasts love. But the love of human beings seems to be different from this. I cannot explain it altogether, but there seems to look from the eyes of men and women something which will

make the man die for the woman, and the woman live for the man. Before we love, we think mostly for ourselves, but when we love we think always, always, always, for that which is more than ourselves . . . the thing to which the heart clings. [*The storm seems to rise again without.*] [*With a change of manner.*] Hark! I hear the wind sighing and the waters moaning! Kühleborn, Kühleborn. . . . No, no, I do not want a soul! I want to be free—free! Kühleborn! [*She goes to the window, throws it open and looks out. Then turning round.*] Shall I sing to you, good Father? Listen to the song of the winds and waters. Act I. Sc. 3.

[*She chants the same song that* KÜHLEBORN *had sung, and as she sings, a soft chorus outside, repeating the same words, grows louder and louder.*

[UNDINE *sings.*]

A night of storm
And a night of woe!
And the sailors bold
And the ships of old
Are hidden and buried for aye
In the deep sea's mystery—
Long, long ago!

The ships are torn
And the men are dead:
And their names are lost
And their bones are tost
Hither and thither, to and fro,
Where no man may see and no man know—
I' the deep sea's bed!

Act I. Sc. 3.

Priest [*rises and goes over to her*]. Child, what are you? I conjure you to tell me. [*He raises the crucifix and* UNDINE *is cowed.*]

Undine. I am Undine, the child of the wave . . . I cannot harm you. But you can harm me. No—I do not want a soul. It frightens me, it frightens me!

Priest [*to* FISHERMAN]. Whose child is this?

Fish. It is ours, holy Father, my wife's and mine. It has been ours for many, many years.

Undine. No—no. I am the child of the sea-depths, born of the foam and the surge. My father is the Lord of the Mediterranean, and Kühleborn is my uncle; and my cousins are Arkël, and Sibol, and Harald! I want no soul! I want no soul! Why should I suffer pain and sorrow and remorse?

Priest. Child, God hath sent me to you: He hath still some work for His servant to do. Is it not strange that I should come after seven days' wandering—I that had lost a human soul by my folly and neglect—to find that I may, if Heaven so will, give a soul? . . . I do not rightly understand who you are, nor what is the strange kinship with the winds and waves of which you boast. But this at least I dimly see . . . that you are soulless, and that God gives you the chance, the one chance, to become human and to know Him . . .

Undine [*petulantly*]. I am the spirit of the dancing waters. I will have nothing to do with your pain and sorrow and remorse. . . . Kühleborn, Kühleborn! [*She goes to the window and opens it.*]

Priest. Then my penance must remain unfulfilled; the hard yoke laid on me . . . I must go forth from your home, Fisherman . . . I must fare on my way alone . . .

Fish. [*anxiously*]. Undine, have you no pity on the holy Father?

Huld. Undine, Undine! Do you renounce my love? You cannot love without a human soul. You said so yourself. [UNDINE *looks wistfully at* HULDBRAND.] And your dreams, Undine? Did you not dream that you would find me and put your hand in mine? Was not this the passion of your youth? Why, then, do you start back—now when the time comes to win a human soul? Have you forgotten, have you forgotten, Undine?

Undine [*slowly*]. No, I have not forgotten. [*She shuts the window, against which there comes a rattle of water and wind.*] Peace, peace, Kühleborn! It is fated that so it should be. No one can escape the thing that is doomed! And it is better that I should live the new life . . .

Priest. God be with thee, my daughter, for thou seest more than all of us. It may be that thou wilt suffer if thou becomest human; but thou shalt know joy and sorrow and love—the things which are of great price. And for awhile, may be, thou shalt taste all the blessedness of human warmth and the kindness of human hearts . . .

Undine [*whose manner has become very quiet and who has come back to* HULDBRAND]. Say it again, say it again, Huldbrand!

Act I. Sc. 3.

Huld. Say what again, Undine?

Undine. That you love me.

Huld. I love you, Undine.

Undine. I love you, Huldbrand. I shall always love you. [*She kisses him.*]

Undine [*starting away*]. But will you always be kind to me? Never say a harsh or bitter word?

Huld. Never, never, Undine.

Undine. For, indeed, you must not be angry with me, if you would keep me by your side. Hark, how the spirits of the air are storming outside! Hark, how Kühleborn raves! For he knows that I am going away from him, from the old home . . . to the new home—where all will be strange. Never be angry with me, Huldbrand . . .

Huld. Never, Undine.

Undine. For if you speak bitter words to me, by the sea, or by the river, by running streams or dancing fountains, then will the spell be undone, and I shall go back to Kühleborn! It is by love that I am winning a human soul, and if love fails then the human soul is lost. . . . Do you understand, Huldbrand?

Huld. I understand. [*He gives her his hand.*]

Undine. Holy Father, give us your blessing. Make us man and wife.

Priest [*raises his hands over them as they kneel*]. If his love be thine and thine be his, then I pronounce you, Huldbrand and Undine, to be man and wife. God's blessing rest on you. [*They rise.*]

Fish. [*embracing* UNDINE]. God be with you, my child. You are my child at last!

Undine [*going back to* HULDBRAND]. Say it again, say it again, Huldbrand!

Huld. I love you, I love you, Undine. [*They kiss.*]

ACT II

[*Some weeks elapse.*]

Scene I

Act II. Sc. 1. *At Castle Ringstetten. It is midday. The scene is a large hall opening on a balustrade looking over the courtyard. There is a fountain with gushing water at the end of the hall. The hall is full of guests, as it is the day of welcome for* Sir Huldbrand *and his wife* Undine. *Among the guests are the* Fisherman *and his* Wife, *whose appearance causes some surprise and derision; but they are evidently there for a purpose. Constant movement is seen in the crowd and laughter. There are three beggar men and one blind man with dog on the steps.*

1*st Beggar.* It is a good day for us when the Count comes home.

Blind Man. Is the day fair? Does the sun shine?

2*nd Beggar.* The day is fair, but there is no sun; and there are dark clouds gathering in the west.

3*rd Beggar.* And what may that mean? Can you tell us that?

Blind Man. Joy and sorrow combined: sorrow coming in the evening.

1*st Beggar.* But joy at midday. It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

Fish. When does the Count come?

3*rd Beggar.* We know not: he is waited for now.

Wife [*to blind man*]. Why sayest thou sorrow comes in the evening?

Blind Man. Nay, it is not given to me to say why. I see not with my eyes. I see only with the eyes of the soul.

Wife [*shaking her head*]. Ay, ay, no one can tell how the day will end. What must be, will be.

Fish. And Undine comes too—Count Huldbrand's bride!

2*nd Beggar* [*pointing*]. See how the water rises and falls in the fountain!

Blind Man. Is the water angry? Does it rise and fall as though in pain and fury?

Wife. Why should the water be angry?

Blind Man. Nay, I know not. I only know that which I see with the eyes of my soul.

1*st Beggar.* It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

[*Enter* BERTALDA, *with her foster-parents, who, being people of dignity, are shown up to the dais.*

Bert. [*to her parents*]. It is now some weeks since I saw Count Huldbrand, and I marvel at men's fickleness. For, indeed, when I saw him last he was the

Act II. Sc. 1.

victor in the lists, and I the queen to whom, after his battles, he made obeisance. And he made me a certain promise and asked for my gloves. But I said that he should have my gloves only when he had been through the forest (wherein no man is safe) and come back to me again. And now he comes not to beg of me any guerdon for his loyalty and the performance of his word, but as a disloyal knight, who has fallen in love with some leman's eyes, and brings her home as his bride! Truly I marvel that a few weeks should make so great a change!

Fish. [*coming up to her*]. I pray you, good lady, to pardon me, but how soon is the Lady Undine expected to arrive?

Bert. [*haughtily*]. You had better ask one of the attendants. I know no Lady Undine.

Fish. Not know the Lady Undine? Why she is my daughter, and the wife of a worthy knight, Count Huldbrand of Ringstetten!

Wife. Nay, she is no daughter of ours, I would have you know, fair lady, although my good man here is for ever thinking and saying so. She is our foster-daughter, given us by kind Heaven, when our own was lost. [*To herself.*] I know not how all this will betide!

The People [*watching eagerly and pointing to distance, suddenly raise a cheer*]. Long live Count Huldbrand! Long live Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten!

Bert. Worthy knight, indeed! And long live his wife, Undine, the fisherman's daughter!

Fish. [*eagerly*]. Ay, ay. I say Amen to that! Long live Undine!

The People [*laughing at him*]. Thy daughter! A likely story! Tell us, old greybeard! [*They crowd round him.*]

Fish. Ay, sirs, she is my daughter. At least [*looking round anxiously for fear of his wife's correction*] she is our foster-daughter—a fair girl and a beautiful, and the very apple of my eye——

Wife. Nay, good man, hold thy tongue. Dost see how all the folk are laughing at thee?

Bert. There is good cause for laughter if this tale be true. I am glad I let the old man talk. [*Coming over to* FISHERMAN.] She is your daughter, old fisherman?

Fish. Ay, my lady, our foster-daughter.

Bert. And her name is—what did you say?

Fish. Undine, my lady.

Bert. And how came she to be Count Huldbrand's wife?

Fish. The Count came to my cottage—my cottage by the lake—through the forest, the dreadful forest, wherein no man is safe; and because rest is sweet after toil, and safety welcome after danger, he fared well and happily with me and my old wife.

Bert. Yes—and Undine?

Fish. She is a child of springs and seas and running water, and she found grace in the eyes of the Knight. So they were wed, and a Priest, who was with us, gave her his blessing and made them man and wife.

Act II. Sc. 1.

Wife. I wonder at thee, that thou talkest so much. What matters all this to the good lady?

Bert. Nay, I thank you, good fisherman. [*Goes up.*]

The People [*shouting*]. They come, they come! Here are the Count and his bride. Long live the Count Huldbrand! Long live his bride!

[*There is a general commotion, while* HULDBRAND *and* UNDINE, *preceded by* Heralds *and* Serving-men, *appear at the balustrade, having come up from the courtyard, and then pass through hall to the dais. Loud acclamations are heard and then music and song of* Choir. *The* Heralds *blow a fanfare.* UNDINE *is looking here and there—with a pleased and happy smile—and as she sees* FISHERMAN *and* WIFE *she greets them heartily. Her eyes finally rest on the fountain and she grows pensive for a moment.*

Huld. My friends! I thank you for your welcome home. I am glad of your presence here on a day which means so much for my happiness, and I hope, yours also. And I present to you my bride—my bride, Undine, who is as joyful to be with you all as I am.

[*Cheers;* UNDINE *bows and smiles.* "Long live Count Huldbrand's bride, Undine!"

[BERTALDA *and her foster-parents go up to* HULDBRAND, *who presents* UNDINE *to them. They remain talking while* UNDINE *slowly moves towards the fountain. She bends over it. The people are slowly filing out.*

Undine. Kühleborn! Kühleborn! Will you not leave me this one day in peace? Nay, I know thy message, and I will deliver it faithfully. Peace, peace, Kühleborn!

Bert. What says your wife, Sir Count? Did I not hear her speak?

Huld. No—I did not hear her say anything.

Bert. I thought she said some words at the fountain. See, she is now wholly engrossed with the old fisherman and his wife. Perhaps she prefers their conversation to ours.

Huld. Why, yes, in some sort that may be true. They are her parents. Come hither, Undine.

[UNDINE *comes back to dais.*

Bert. You know well the fisherman and his wife, it seems. Can it be true, as I have heard, that they are your parents?

Undine [*with a slow, sweet smile*]. No—they were very good to me at the cottage by the lake. They are, in truth, my foster-parents. But I am not of their kin, I am the child of the waters.

Huld. Not now, Undine.

Undine. No—that is true. I was the child of the waters until I married you. Now I am Count Huldbrand's wife.

Bert. [*laughs*]. One cannot so easily change one's blood by marriage, Undine.

Undine. No, Bertalda, one cannot easily change one's blood. For you, too, hold to your own proper ancestry and carry about with you the blood of your father and mother.

Act II. Sc. 1.

Bert. What do you mean? My parents came with me to this hall to wish you and the Count welcome.

Undine. Your foster-parents, Bertalda. But you do not belong to them, for you were given to them by the will of Heaven as a foundling. They have been very good to you, as my foster-parents have been to me; and you have lived with them now for many years, just as if you had been their very own. But I can give you your real father and mother. Your real father and mother are here! [*Pointing to* FISHERMAN *and* WIFE.]

Bert. Mere fisherfolk!

Huld. What nonsense is this, Undine?

Undine. It is not nonsense, Huldbrand. I know what I am saying, for the secret has been told me—by those you wot of. These two, the fisherman and his wife, lost their child and then found me. Their lost child was taken to Ringstetten and she stands there! [*Pointing to* BERTALDA.] Are you not glad to find your kith and kin?

Bert. Is your wife mad, Huldbrand?

Huld. Hush, hush, Undine, do not speak such wild words. All these things—secret messages, hidden mysteries, marvellous relationships—belong to your past. They have nothing to do with the present, remember.

Undine. But indeed, indeed, what I say is true. [*To* BERTALDA.] Are you not glad to find your father and mother? And you [*turning to* FISHER-

MAN], are you not glad to get back again your own child?

Fish. Nay, nay, you are my child, Undine; I want no other.

Wife. And what have we to do with fine ladies? We live as we can, and we do that which Fate allows.

Undine [*half crying*]. Will no one believe me? Not you—or you—or you?

Huld. [*sternly*]. Where did you learn these fancies, Undine? With whom have you been talking by the way? Are these two [*pointing to* FISHERMAN *and* WIFE] in this plot? [*They shake their heads and move off.*] Or is this fine story only your invention? I had thought differently of you, Undine.

Bert. She wishes to get rid of me, Huldbrand, that is what she desires.

Undine. There is no plot. There is no invention. It is true. He told me.

Huld. He told you? Who? [UNDINE *is silent.*] Was it Heilmann, the priest? [UNDINE *is silent.*] Who was it? [*He comes over to her and seizes her by the hands.*] Tell me. You shall tell me.

Undine [*slowly*]. It was Kühleborn. Oh, let me go!

Huld. [*throwing her off*]. I thought all that was over. I hoped you were beginning a new life! But you have deceived me, it appears, Undine. You have

Act II. Sc. 2.

made a mock at Bertalda. You have filled me with shame.

[UNDINE, *bursting into tears, goes sadly through the hall. The* FISHERMAN *and his* WIFE *hold out their hands to her, and she goes out with them. As she passes the steps the fountain bubbles furiously.* 1*st* BEGGAR MAN *is on the steps.*

1*st Beggar Man.* It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

SCENE II

BERTALDA *and* HULDBRAND *alone. A silence.*

Bert. I congratulate you on your wife, Huldbrand.

Huld. Nay, she was overwrought—tired, maybe, with her journey.

Bert. Is that so? To me she seemed not so much tired, as——

Huld. As what, Bertalda?

Bert. Well, if she was mad, there was some sense and method in her madness.

Huld. What do you mean?

Bert. You must forgive me if I ask you a question, Huldbrand. For, indeed, in some senses, I have a right to know. When you went through the forest and found Undine at the cottage by the lake, did you have some talk, you two, about each other and about the past? Did she tell you anything about herself, and did you tell her anything about yourself?

Huld. Yes, we talked—we talked of many things. But I do not, of course, remember all that we said.

Bert. Oh, I know that Undine is more beautiful than I am, and beauty has its privileges. When a man talks to a beautiful woman he is not thinking of what she says, but of what she is. It is enough for him that something lovely and exquisite and gracious is before his eyes. So when you were talking to Undine, it was Undine's beauty you were thinking of, not of the precise words she was uttering. But perhaps you may remember what you told her about yourself?

Huld. Yes, Bertalda, I think I do.

Bert. Did you tell her why you had passed through the forest, for example?

Huld. Yes, I said I was under some sort of challenge and promise, so that I must needs pass through—on the honour of my knighthood.

Bert. And you mentioned my name?

Huld. Yes.

Bert. Then I quite understand Undine's little plot, Huldbrand!

Huld. Was it a plot, Bertalda?

Bert. You gave it that name yourself! But if Undine knew that you loved me before you loved her —or, shall I say, that we had talked together before ever such a woman as Undine had been heard of— why it is just possible that she was—what shall I say? —jealous? You are silent, Huldbrand—but is it not, at least, possible? And, after all, what do you know of Undine?

Act II. Sc. 2.

Huia. Bertalda, Bertalda, she is my wife.

Bert. Yes, I know she is your wife, but what do you know of her, of her ancestry, of her character, her nature? Who is this Kühleborn of whom she speaks? And why does she mutter to herself when she thinks no one is noticing her? There is something strange and uncanny about her, and you know it.

Huld. Bertalda, she is my wife.

Bert. Oh yes, she is your wife; but is she the wife for Count Huldbrand of Ringstetten? How will Count Huldbrand be able to live with all these Kühleborns and this love of fountains and this muttering of spells and incantations? What is Count Huldbrand's place in a home shared with elves and sprites and hobgoblins? Have you thought of all this?

Huld. Oh, Bertalda, do not talk of these things; she is my wife.

Bert. And I—have I no right to be heard? Is Bertalda so wholly forgotten? What were the words you said to me only a few weeks ago? For whose sake did you go through the forest? Who was the queen of the tourney when you fought so stoutly in the lists? Is it the same Huldbrand who whispered soft words of love in my ear, and who asked of me, as the gage and testament of his plighted troth, my gloves? Will you ask of me my gloves now, Huldbrand?

Huld. Bertalda, Bertalda . . .

Bert. Ah, Huldbrand, Huldbrand, is man's memory

so short? I have not forgotten, Huldbrand, for woman's love has deeper roots—it cannot be torn up and flung aside so easily. [*Coming close to him.*] Huldbrand, will you take my gloves now?

Huld. No, no—Bertalda . . .

Bert. See, I offer them to you, Huldbrand. I will give you my gloves and you shall give me that little chain you wear. It shall be my necklace, and it shall never be taken from my neck. . . . Just for memory's sake, Huldbrand, will you grant me this little boon?

Huld. Yes, Bertalda [*slowly*], I will give you the chain and welcome. But your gloves I may not have . . . no—no . . . they cannot belong to me—now. [*Gives her the chain.*]

Bert. Will you not put the chain round my neck, Huldbrand? For memory's sake? [*He is putting the chain round her neck. She holds up her face to him.*] For memory's sake, Huldbrand? [*He bends, as he kisses her.*]

[*The stage grows dark. The fountain plashes noisily. There is a flash, and* KÜHLEBORN *is heard singing. Terror of* BERTALDA, *who clings to* HULDBRAND. *In the midst of the turmoil,* UNDINE *comes in, and the stage grows light again. They start apart.*

SCENE III

Undine. Kühleborn! Kühleborn! Will you never leave me free? Peace! Peace! [*She goes over to fountain, which becomes calmed.*]

Act II. Sc. 3.

Huld. I know not what sort of peace we are likely to have here, Undine. But is there never to be any breaking of the old ties which bind you to these spirits of yours? What kind of new life is this—such as you promised—nay, swore to me on your wedding-day? You are false to your oath, Undine.

Undine. Ah, Huldbrand, it is not I who am false to our oaths—the oaths we both made when we were wed. For, indeed, the spirit of the waters is not wroth without cause, nor is he wont to vex himself for naught. I know not what may have stirred his anger, but——

Bert. Perhaps it is I, Undine.

Undine. Perhaps—I know not.

Bert. [*to* HULDBRAND]. You hear how madly she is set on driving me forth? First, the false story about my parentage: and now the suspicion that I vex her attendant . . . devils!

Huld. For shame, for shame, Undine. What has Bertalda done that you thus pursue her with spite and jealousy?

Undine [*sadly*]. I pursue her with spite and jealousy? Of what, then, should I be jealous? Nay, I know not whether it be she or you or I with whom the spirit of the waters is wroth. But, Huldbrand, I beseech you, look not on me so coldly and strangely. Ask yourself what I have done. Have I failed in my wifely duty?

Huld. These interruptions from the spirit world, this constant reminiscence that I won you in spite of

winds and waves—they make me mad. I thought the old order had changed when Father Heilmann gave us his blessing.

Bert. It is not likely to be a peaceful house, where spirits of evil are abroad.

Undine [*with a sigh*]. We must have the fountain closed, dear Huldbrand.

Huld. The fountain? But it has been here in this hall for years. It belongs to my father and grandfather and the past generations of my house.

Undine. Nevertheless, I beg of you, have it closed. If there be a great stone placed on the top, so that no water can bubble through, then the spirits of the water cannot make their presence known, and I shall be at rest and you once more content with me.

Bert. Close the fountain? What silly tale is this? For myself I like the fountain!

[*She goes over to it, playing with the necklace which* HULDBRAND *had given her.*

Undine. Bertalda, Bertalda, do not go near the fountain!

Bert. Why not? I am not afraid of it. I have known it for years. Dear fountain, we are old friends, are we not?

[*She bends over it. Suddenly a hand comes from the fountain and snatches the necklace away.* BERTALDA *gives a cry.*

Bert. Oh, my necklace, my necklace!

Undine. Bertalda, what is it? What have you lost?

Act II. Sc. 3.

Bert. My necklace, my necklace! The necklace which Huldbrand gave me! Give it back to me! [*She holds out imploring hands to the fountain.*]

Undine [*slowly*]. The necklace Huldbrand gave you? When? Why? Oh, Huldbrand! [*She covers her face with her hands.*]

Bert. My necklace! Can you not help me, Undine? You are in league with these spirits! Ask them to give it back!

Undine. Am I to help her, Huldbrand?

Huld. [*turning away*]. Of course. If you can, Undine.

Undine. Very well, if you wish it.

[UNDINE *goes slowly over to the fountain, and, bending over it, sings a little crooning song.*

I weave the spell of the wayside streams
Where the wise old willows grow:
There is peace, there is peace, 'neath the tender beams
When the westering sun is low.

I weave the spell of the twilight hour
Which all mortal things obey;
There is sleep, there is sleep, when the shadows lower
At the close of the long, long day.

[*Then she dips her hand into the water and brings out another necklace, made of coral, which she offers to* BERTALDA.

Undine. Here, Bertalda.

Bert. But this coral gaud is not my necklace! I want no present from your evil spirits, Undine. I

want the necklace with great pearls which Huldbrand gave me. Huldbrand, speak to her; speak to this sorceress of yours, who is not content with her lies and slander, but steals . . . what is yours and mine . . . Act II. Sc. 3.

Huld. [*striding over to fountain*]. Come, come, I have had enough of this. I do not choose to have my presents exchanged in this fashion! [*He seizes the coral necklace from* BERTALDA'S *hands and flings it away.*] There! I wash my hands of all your devilries!

Undine [*covers her face and bursts out weeping*]. Oh, Huldbrand, Huldbrand!

Huld. Is it not time? Have I not borne with all this foolery long enough? When I married you, I did not marry all the wild heritage of the past. I married you for what you are—not for what you had been. The Undine whom I brought away from the cottage by the lake was quiet, tender, submissive . . . not a witch in league with spirits!

Undine. Oh, Huldbrand—and am I not even now quiet, tender, submissive? Can I help it that when you bring me near fountains and streams, and running water, the old links which bound me to the sea, with my father in the Mediterranean and with Kühleborn, revive and grow strong again? Did I not warn you of this? Did I not, only a moment ago, bid you close up this fountain for fear of what might happen? Did I not beg Bertalda not to go near?

Huld. I have nothing to do with all this. I only know that Undine my wife must have no relations with Undine the daughter of the floods! I thought

Act II. Sc. 3.

that this was your promise when we plighted our troth in the cottage.

Undine. Oh, be patient, dear Huldbrand. For it only needs a little patience, a little love, a little sympathy, and all will be well. Gradually the whole past will wear itself away and be forgotten like a dream. But you must love me, you must love me, Huldbrand! Only love can work the miracle of change, or bring a soul to its full maturity.

Bert. [*laughs*]. The daughter of the fisherman is too modest! Listen to the small and insignificant boon she asks!

Undine. Nay, it is not much for love to ask or love to grant.

Huld. And *my* life meanwhile? Is it to be one constant storm, haunted by all these demons of evil who scruple not to rob by force the gifts I choose to make? Or is it only to you that I may be allowed to give gifts?

Undine. Oh, Huldbrand, why did you give your necklace to Bertalda?

Huld. Ah, there, I suppose, is the root of the whole matter, Undine. But understand me, once for all, I shall give gifts when the fancy takes me, and I shall give them to whomsoever I choose.

[*The fountain bubbles up once more.*

Undine [*looking with alarm at the fountain*]. Oh, Huldbrand, I beg of you not to speak so loudly!

Bert. [*laughs once more*]. Are you master in your own house, Huldbrand?

Huld. I intend to be : and my wife must be something different from this . . . witch.

[*Fountain bubbles up again.*

Undine [*throwing herself on her knees before him*]. Oh, Huldbrand, Huldbrand, do not say such terrible words ! See—I will do all you ask. I will try to be the wife you wish, there is no single thought or desire of yours that I will not seek to understand, and —if it be possible for me—carry out. I will work for you, tend you in health or sickness, surround you with my tenderest love, live for nothing else save you—you—you. Only do not look at me so angrily ; do not say such cruel words. Remember that I warned you, and you promised not to be angry with me. You promised, you promised, Huldbrand. Have you forgotten ?

Huld. Will you banish once for all these associates of yours, who live in fountains and waters ? Will you swear to me that there shall be no more interruptions from the spirit world ? Will you break this power which Kühleborn exercises over you and over my house ? Am I to have peace or war ?

Undine. Be patient, be patient, Huldbrand.

Huld. No, I will not be patient. I mean to have peace. Will you swear to me that henceforth you . . .

[*Fountain bubbles with greater violence.*

Undine. Oh, Huldbrand, you know I cannot yet . . . it is not possible yet . . .

Huld. [*furious*]. Very well then. My mind is made up. In the name of all the witches, go and live

Act II. Sc. 3.

with them, and leave us mortals in peace! Sorceress as you are, there is no room for you in my house! Out of my sight . . . witch!

[*There is a blinding flash of lightning, the stage grows dark.* KÜHLEBORN *comes forth from the fountain and clasps* UNDINE *in his arms. There is a long roll of thunder.*

Undine [*as she fades away*]. Huldbrand . . . Huldbrand . . .

[*Terror of* BERTALDA, *who runs to* HULDBRAND. *He holds her close for a moment. He then sternly repels her, and she runs out.* HULDBRAND, *left alone, stands for a moment, gazing fixedly after* UNDINE, *takes a few steps after her, and returns. Then falls on his knees and holds out his hands.*

Huld. Undine . . . Undine . . .

ACT III

[*A week elapses*]

Scene I

A wild gorge of the mountains near Ringstetten through which a stream runs. It is late afternoon, which, as the scene progresses, changes through sunset to twilight. There are large boulders and rocks. On the crest of one of the environing hills is a wayside crucifix. Father Heilmann *and a* Shepherd *meet in the gorge.*

Heil. [*to* Shepherd]. You are searching for something?

Shep. Ay. It is difficult to find them sometimes when they stray away.

Heil. What is it you are looking for?

Shep. A sheep.

Heil. I will help you, for I too am looking for something.

Shep. What is it?

Heil. A human soul. It is difficult to find it sometimes when it strays away.

Shep. Ay, ay, maybe I shall find my sheep before you find your human soul.

Heil. I don't know. It is possible. Shall we help each other?

Shep. I am willing enough. But I know a sheep when I see it, and . . .

Act III. Sc. 1.

Heil. You do not know a human soul?

Shep. [*with a laugh*]. Well—no. It is your business, human souls: just as mine is sheep.

Heil. Yes, we are both shepherds. You know the country well?

Shep. I ought to. I have been over it since I was a boy. But the sheep are foolish things, when you leave them by themselves, and sometimes they fall down the gorge and break their legs.

Heil. Yes, yes. Human souls are foolish things, too, when left to themselves. They are very apt to fall, or else they are driven away by cruelty, or stupidity, or carelessness: and then it is a long search to recover them again.

Shep. [*who has climbed up, and stands by the crucifix*]. You will see the country better, if you stand up here.

Heil. Yes. The Cross will help both you and me.

[*He climbs up. Meanwhile* HULDBRAND *comes down the gorge. There is a distant hollo.*

Shep. Ah, Father, there is my mate calling to me. Mayhap, he has found the sheep! Good luck be with you! [*Exit.*

Heil. And God aid you!

[*They both disappear over the crest of the mountain.*

[HULDBRAND *sits and sings.*]

Why do you turn away,
Face that was always kind?
If life hath gone astray,
Is nothing left behind?

You ask—must this be true
  We pass and we forget;
With love for what is new,
  For old a bare regret?

Not so: in worlds grown gray,
  New good we shall not find;
Why do you turn away,
  Face that was always kind?

Heil. [*re-enters*]. Ah, here is one of my penitents! Has he found his sheep, I wonder? [*He climbs down.*]

Huld. Father Heilmann, you? Let me help you.

Heil. Nay, let me help you, my son. I think you need it more than I. You have not found Undine?

Huld. No. I have not seen her since she disappeared from Ringstetten. I have looked everywhere, but Kühleborn keeps his secret well.

Heil. Have you asked yourself why she had to leave you?

Huld. Oh, Father, I know full well. I was wroth with her, exceeding wroth: and that, too, when I had promised never to be angry with her. I have done wrong, Father, a great, irremediable wrong! And now she has left me for ever!

Heil. And Bertalda?

Huld. Speak not of her. She was to blame as well as I. I drove her from the castle. I shall not see her again.

Act III. Sc. 1.

Heil. My son, you have done grievous wrong. But we must both look for Undine, lest she perish for ever. The burden lies as heavy on me as on you.

Huld. Nay, Father, you have not driven her away.

Heil. But it was I who helped to give her a human soul. Her love for you inspired her with longing: the clasp of your arms fulfilled her desire. But it was the Divine blessing that my lips were allowed to utter which set the seal on the bond. And as I found a human soul to lift off my own shoulders the penance that was set on me: so must I re-discover it again to save a human soul from perdition. Woe is me, if I find her not!

Huld. Must she perish, if we find her not?

Heil. Surely—for then she returns to the spirits and demons from whom we delivered her.

Huld. [*sadly*]. Nay—may it not be better that she should return to her old home? Was she not a stranger in our midst, an exile amongst men of rough speech and wild ways, such as I?

Heil. And you, my son, what will you do without her?

Huld. Mea culpa! I have done wrong and I must suffer. [*Sits down wearily by a stone.*]

Heil. [*mounting the pass again*]. Come up to the Cross, my son! The Cross may help you. [*He goes over the crest of the hill and disappears.*]

Scene II

BERTALDA *is seen coming down the gorge. The sun is setting.* Act III. Sc. 2.

Huld. [*rests his head upon his hand*]. Nay, how shall Priest or Cross help me now? When that which we know to be the highest has come into our life, and we have driven it away, what help is it to make moan and say we have sinned? The Light has gone! The Light has gone!

Bertalda [*has come down during* HULDBRAND'S *speech and creeps swiftly like a snake behind him*]. Can I help you, Huldbrand?

Huld. Bertalda! You here?

Bert. Yes, Huldbrand, I am here. Why did you drive me away?

Huld. [*sitting up and facing her with anger in his eyes*]. Why did I drive you away? I will tell you. Because you crept like a snake between me and my happiness. Because you tempted me when I was weak, and played upon my folly till I grew mad. Because you made me think that I was to be master in my own house, when I had wedded a Queen. Because it was you, you above all others, who have torn Undine from my arms . . .

Bert. Enough, enough, Huldbrand. You drove me away because I told you the truth—that there could be no happiness in your marriage. Did not your marriage fail?

Act III. Sc. 2.

Huld. Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes! But it is not her fault. It is not Undine's fault. I know it now. No, it was not the fault of the Queen, nor of him who should have been her slave. The fault was yours . . . yours . . . yours!

Bert. [*with a slight smile*]. And in no sense yours? [HULDBRAND *does not answer.*] Not yours? [HULDBRAND *sinks down and bows his head on his hands.*] Come, come, Huldbrand, you were not wont to be a fool. See now, I do not wish to pain you. I will say no word but what is wise. I will not even say that you were to blame. You are a man . . . that is all, and, like a man, you wanted certain things. Every man, all the world over, wants . . .

Huld. Why have you come here?

Bert. Oh, I will not pain you. Every man, all the world over, wants certain things . . . warmth and happiness and human love. He wants round him the home of common joys and common hopes. He wants round him the arms of some one like himself, a woman who knows and understands. It is not much he wants, after all . . . just peace and rest and a woman's face, after his everyday struggle is over. He does not want coldness and aloofness, an icicle of purity . . .

Huld. What are you saying, Bertalda?

Bert. Nay, ask yourself. Does a man always need a saint to worship? Does he really love an image on a pedestal? Is it a pleasure to him to be ever kneeling at a shrine? Is it? Ask yourself. Does a man like to humble himself in the dust before the woman

he loves? Oh, Huldbrand! Is not that on which a man's eyes love to fasten just a woman's hair, a woman's flushing cheek, a woman's heaving breast? Something he can touch and fondle and kiss?

Huld. [*hiding his face on his knees*]. Retro me, Sathana. . . .

Bert. Where would the husband be whose wife was a saint? I can tell you where he would not be . . . within the walls of his own home. For what part or lot would he have in that which was for ever above and beyond him, a thing that had no human heart, a beautiful, passionless . . . Undine. . . .

Huld. [*starts up*]. You shall not say her name. Her name is soiled by your lips. Bertalda—who may not say Bertalda? But Undine! but Undine! . . .

Bert. [*laughs*]. And how are your lips better fitted to say Undine? You said her name once, when you thought you loved her. Then you were angry with Undine, and Undine left you. Would you not often have been angry with Undine? Undine . . . what is Undine? Where is Undine?

Huld. [*almost lifting his hand to strike her*]. For Heaven's sake, do not tempt me too far. You do not understand . . . let me remember that! You cannot understand. Leave me, for Heaven's sake, leave me!

Bert. [*very coolly*]. Leave you? What, as you have left me? Forgive me, Huldbrand, I was wrong to say one word against Undine. She was fair and beautiful. But she is gone. Where is she now?

Huld. Ah, do not mock me . . . you know I am

Act III. Sc. 2.

alone. . . . Yet, perchance, I may see her again. Leave me that one hope . . . that one star in blackest night!

Bert. And what of me? Have you ever considered what you have done to me? There was a time when you loved me, Huldbrand—nay, do not start and shake your head—when you thought that you loved me. You asked of me a pledge. You wore my colours through the forest. You gave me your necklace. You kissed my lips.

Huld. Ah, my God!

Bert. Is that all over, Huldbrand? [*She comes nearer to him.*] Is it? [*She puts her hand on his shoulder. He shakes it off.*] Oh, Huldbrand! Huldbrand!

Huld. [*rising angrily, then controlling himself*]. You do not understand . . . you do not understand!

Bert. [*bursting into tears*]. Forgive me, I am weak and a woman. We will not speak of that. The past is dead . . . dead. But what of the future? What is to become of me . . . of me whom you have kissed?

Huld. What do you mean?

Bert. Did you not kiss me, Huldbrand? I thought it was you . . . when you gave me the necklace, do you remember?

Huld. Hush, hush!

Bert. And where am I to go . . . now? Bertalda, whom Huldbrand kissed, to whose life he once laid claim, whose gloves he begged, and to whom he gave the necklace from his own neck. . . . Bertalda has no home.

Huld. [*with some sternness*]. Go back to your parents, Bertalda. . . .

Bert. To my parents? But they are not my parents. Undine was right. I know it all now, and they know it. They are my foster-parents, as Undine said. They do not belong to me, nor I to them. And my real parents are a fisherman and his wife, who will have none of me and who are gone . . . I know not where. [*Coming close to* HULDBRAND *again.*] Huldbrand, I am alone . . . alone!

Huld. [*rising, takes a pace or two backwards and forwards, while* BERTALDA *falls on her knees and holds out her hands to him in piteous appeal*]. Bertalda, listen to me. God knows I am sorry for all that has been done . . . for you and for myself. I know that the fault is mine. It is not so much yours as mine. I have been to blame throughout. I was wrong when I asked to be your knight-errant through the forest. I was wrong, doubly wrong, when I gave you the necklace. I was wrong, doubly and trebly wrong, when I let you move me to anger against Undine . . . when you made me drive her back to her kindred. It seemed to me then that I wanted my wife to be as I am, as human as I. My punishment is great therefor. But I do not want it now.

Bert. [*slowly*]. You do not want it now?

Huld. No, Bertalda, my wrong was great, but I will not make it greater. We do not make wrong right by adding thereto another wrong. It may be that you tempted me somewhat . . . but I will say

Act III. Sc. 2.

nothing of that. I will say the fault was wholly mine. Only now, that my eyes are open and I see aright, I will not again choose blindness.

Bert. [*with some wonder*]. Blindness? You call it blindness, Huldbrand?

Huld. Yes, blindness. If one moves in the dark, and some kindly hand sheds light through an open door, one does not care any longer for the dark. When the morning dawns, the windows are thrown wide open and the night is left behind. The brightness of the day leaves no longing for the sombre shadows of the dark . . .

Bert. [*gathering herself slowly up, scornfully, on her feet*]. Is this true, Huldbrand?

Huld. My morning has dawned . . . my day has come! I can never go back! She came, who has made all things different, my star of morning, my sunlight, my day! I can never go back!

Bert. [*with concentrated anger*]. You can never go back! Coward! Liar! Traitor! [*She hisses the words to herself.*]

Huld. And if I never see her again it will always be the same! She will always be Undine, the child of the morning wave, my bride, my love, always my Undine! [FATHER HEILMANN *is seen on the mountain ridge.*]

Bert. [*through her teeth*]. You fool! She has left you! She is gone!

Huld. [*sinking down;* FATHER HEILMANN *seeing* HULDBRAND *and* BERTALDA, *is rapidly coming down the*

gorge]. Gone! Is she gone? No, no, she is not gone. She is always with me—I feel her presence here. She has not wholly left me. Her breath is on my face. I see her hair, her lips, her mouth! Undine, come back! come back to me! [*He sinks forward, face in his hands.* FATHER HEILMANN *is close to them.*]

Bert. [*behind him, swiftly takes out a knife*]. Fool! . . . [*She raises her hand to plunge the knife into his neck, when her arm is seized by* FATHER HEILMANN *from behind.* HULDBRAND *starts up, and, after a brief struggle,* BERTALDA *is disarmed. She bursts into an agony of weeping.*]

Huld. Bertalda!

Heil. My daughter, my daughter! I have come in time. Thank God, I have come in time! Nay, do not speak! There is no need for words! [BERTALDA *sobs.*] No need for words! No need for tears . . . save for those that will heal thee, if thou repentest. Come with me, daughter, come with me! Leave Huldbrand here—he hath his own repentance to make. But thou . . . pray Heaven that I may save thy soul! Come with me! God hath still some work for His servant to do!

[*He takes her away, she going with him, submissive, quiet, like a child. They pass upward towards the Cross, where the Priest stays for a moment with hands clasped, praying. Then they disappear.* HULDBRAND *throws himself once more on the ground. He begins in a low voice a verse of the song.*

Act III.
Sc. 3.

[HULDBRAND *sings*].

Why do you turn away,
Face that was always kind?
If life hath gone astray,
Is nothing left behind?

SCENE III

The sun has set and a glimmering moonlight begins. HULDBRAND *is seated with head bent by the stone. As he repeats the verse with low voice, some soft music begins, at first very quietly, then louder. At last* UNDINE *comes out of the running stream and stands over* HULDBRAND.

[UNDINE *sings.*]

Death and sorrow and sleep—
Here where the slow waves creep
This is the chant I hear,
The chant of the measureless deep.

What was sorrow to me
Then when the young life free
Thirsted for joys of earth
Far from the desolate sea?

What was sleep but a rest,
Giving to youth the best
Dreams from the ivory gate,
Visions of God manifest?

What was death but a tale
  Told to faces grown pale,
Worn and wasted with years—
  A meaningless thing to the hale?

Death and sorrow and sleep—
  Now their sad message I keep,
Tossed on the wet wind's breath,
  The chant of the measureless deep.

Undine. Huldbrand!

Huld. [*starting up*]. Undine!

Undine. You must not touch me, Huldbrand. I am no longer yours. Only have I had leave to speak with you for a while. For I saw you sad and lonely, and then I knew that your love for Undine was not dead, and that you would be glad to see her once again.

Huld. Ah, Undine . . .

Undine. Are you not glad, Huldbrand?

Huld. Yes, yes . . . but I know not what to say, Undine . . .

Undine. No, for all things are now changed. We can neither of us go back to the past, dear Huldbrand; the will of those mightier than ourselves has so ordained. But I wished to see you once more, as, indeed, I think you wished to see me. You have sought me for long, have you not?

Huld. I have sought you, Undine—as a hungry man seeks for bread, as a shipwrecked man strains his eyes to find the land, as a dying man prays for the Holy Elements to deliver his soul . . .

Act III. Sc. 3.

Undine. But I may not deliver you, or at least not wholly. We cannot alter the past, neither by tears nor by prayer; and what has once been done remains done to the end of time. Perhaps I was foolish when I wished to become human and to win my humanity by marrying you. I do not know whether I was foolish or not, but the time is past for thinking of that. I have had my chance, and somehow—through my fault or another's—I have failed.

Huld. Undine, I cannot speak as you speak. Whether you were foolish or not in marrying me, Heaven knows; but I know that it was no madness in me to desire to marry you. For you were my Ideal, and you still are: only I have forfeited my Ideal, because I was too common and coarse and headstrong to live in the purer air.

Undine. Do not say that, Huldbrand. The fault, I think, was not altogether yours. How could I, child of the sea-waves and the running water, hope to be veritably human—to live the warm, fitful, inconstant, lovable life of mortal men? Only a miracle could have made my blood one with yours or teach my pulses to keep tune with yours. How could I hope to become all you wanted in a wife?

Huld. Another man might have taught you, Undine, the fault was mine that I could not. The highest life is that which realises the wonderful union of spirit and flesh in our everyday existence. The man who paints a picture does it; the man who writes or sings

does it. Some men can marry the Ideal and bring her to their hearth-side.

Undine. But does she remain the Ideal? I know not, Huldbrand. Perhaps I am not the Ideal. Or perhaps only in some other world can I keep true to my nature . . .

Huld. Ah, Undine! [*Pauses.*]

Undine. Huldbrand?

Huld. Will you not come back to me—after all? May not the miracle be wrought, even now?

Undine. No—no, Huldbrand, I may not come—it is not permitted. I was only allowed to see you for a brief moment or two . . . lest you should break your heart with longing.

Huld. My heart is breaking now, Undine . . .

Undine. No, no, Huldbrand.

Huld. I cannot live without you, for you have taught me things which I cannot forget. You have altered my life, and I cannot take it up again, as though you had never been. . . . Will you not kiss me, at least, Undine?

Undine. No—no—I may not . . . unless . . .

Huld. Unless?

Undine. Unless you choose to come to me. If I kiss you it will kill you, Huldbrand. You will have to give up your human life and live my life, wherever I am . . .

Huld. Wherever you are, I choose to be with you. . . . Kiss me, Undine.

Undine. And live not your life, but mine?

Act III. Sc. 3.

Huld. And live your life—always. . . . Kiss me, Undine.

Undine. Think well, dear Huldbrand. Your mortal life is sweet.

Huld. But life with you is sweeter. . . . Kiss me, Undine. [*He holds out his arms. She bends to him and kisses him.*]

Huld. I love you, Undine.

Undine. Say it again, Huldbrand, say it again.

Huld. I love you, Undine, I shall always love you.

[*The scene gradually fades as* HULDBRAND *and* UNDINE *are clasped in each other's arms.*

THE END

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